

Message Text

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FAS FOR GRAIN AND FEEDS/NOVOTNY FROM AGATTACHE

E.O. 11652: NA
TAGS: EAGR CZ
SUBJECT: CZECHOSLOVAK HARVEST SITUATION

1. ON SEPTEMBER 5 AG ATTACHE MET BENA AND FISHER OF THE
FEDERAL MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE TO DISCUSS LATEST HARVEST
SITUATION IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA. FOLLOWING ARE MAJOR POINTS
LEARNED.

2. GRAIN HARVEST HAMPERED BY BAD WEATHER BUT NOW IN FULL
SWING IN THE WESTERN PART OF THE COUNTRY (CZECH LANDS) WHILE
HARVEST IN THE EAST (SLOVAKIA), ALSO HAMPERED BY BAD WEATHER,
ALREADY COMPLETED. ON THE WHOLE, THE GRAIN CROP LOOKS
REASONABLY GOOD. IT IS STILL TOO EARLY TO JUDGE EXACT
OUTCOME. FINAL ASSESSMENT OF GRAIN CROP CANNOT BE MADE
BEFORE END OF SEPTEMBER SINCE MUCH OF HARVEST RESULTS STILL
DEPEND ON WHAT WEATHER WILL PREVAIL IN COMING WEEKS.

3. MINAG OFFICIALS AGREE THAT THE SLOVAK GRAIN CROP
TARGETED AT 3.8 MIL TONS MAY BE SHY OF THIS TONNAGE BY
0.2 TO 0.3 MIL TONS. MAIN REASON IS THE RELATIVELY POOR
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CORN CROP WHICH WEIGHS HEAVILY IN THE TOTAL GRAIN
CROP OF THIS REGION.

4. THE 7 MIL TONS GRAIN CROP TARGETED FOR THE CZECH
REGION MAY STILL BE ACHIEVED IF CURRENT GOOD WEATHER
HOLDS. OTHERWISE, HEAVIER THAN NORMAL HARVEST LOSSES MAY
CUT PRODUCTION BELOW THE TARGET.

5. THE BAKING QUALITY OF THE WHEAT IS LOWER THAN IT WAS LAST YEAR BECAUSE OF LACK OF ADEQUATE SUNSHINE DURING THE GROWING SEASON. IN CONTRAST, THE BARLEY CROP WILL BE BETTER THAN LAST YEAR. HOWEVER, THE CORN CROP MAY WELL TURN OUT TO BE DISAPPOINTING. MINAG OFFICIALS AGREED THAT INSTEAD OF THE TARGETED 1 MIL TONS, CORN PRODUCTION MAY BE AS LOW AS 0.7 MIL TONS.

6. COMMENTS: ALTHOUGH BOTH BENA AND FISHER WERE CAREFUL NOT TO USE QUANTITATIVE FORECASTS FOR THE GRAIN CROP, CLEAR IMPRESSION WAS THAT CZECHOSLVAKIA IS NOT GOING TO HARVEST A RECORD CROP AS ENVISIONED EARLIER DURING THE YEAR. THERE HAVE BEEN MEDIA REPORTS (RADIO) THAT SLOVAKIA'S GRAIN HARVEST WILL BE SECOND HIGHEST ON RECORD WHICH SUGGESTS AROUND 3.5 MIL TONS--300,000 TONS BELOW THE TARGET. THE CZECH GRAIN SITUATION DOES NOT LOOK MUCH BETTER ALTHOUGH WEATHER HAMPERED THE HARVEST HERE LESS THAN IN THE EAST. ONE OF THE HARDEST HIT GRAINS IS CORN. NOT ONLY WAS CORN SOWN LATE, BUT THE WET AND COOL SUMMER DID NOT PERMIT PROPER DEVELOPMENT OF THIS GRAIN. WE STILL BELIEVE CZECHOSLOVAKIA'S GRAIN HARVEST TO BE AROUND 10.3 MIL TONS, ABOUT THE SAME AS LAST YEAR, STILL A RESPECTABLE TONNAGE. THERE SHOULD BE SOMEWHAT LESS CORN AND WHEAT BUT MORE BARLEY THIS YEAR THAN LAST.

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7. THE 10.3 MIL TONNAGE WAS ALSO SUGGESTED CRYPTICALLY DURING THE HARVEST FESTIVAL TWO WEEKS AGO IN SLOVAKIA BY SLOVAK PRIME MINISTER COLOTKA. HE SAID, AMONG OTHER THINGS, THAT CZECHOSLOVAK SOCIALIST AGRICULTURE HAS MADE TREMENDOUS PROGRESS DURING THE LAST TEN YEARS AND THAT IN 1978 THE COUNTRY WILL HARVEST ROUGHLY 3 MIL TONS MORE GRAIN THAN TEN YEARS AGO. STATISTICS SHOW THAT IN 1967 CZECHOSLOVAKIA HARVESTED ALMOST 7.4 MIL TONS OF GRAIN.

BYRNE

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